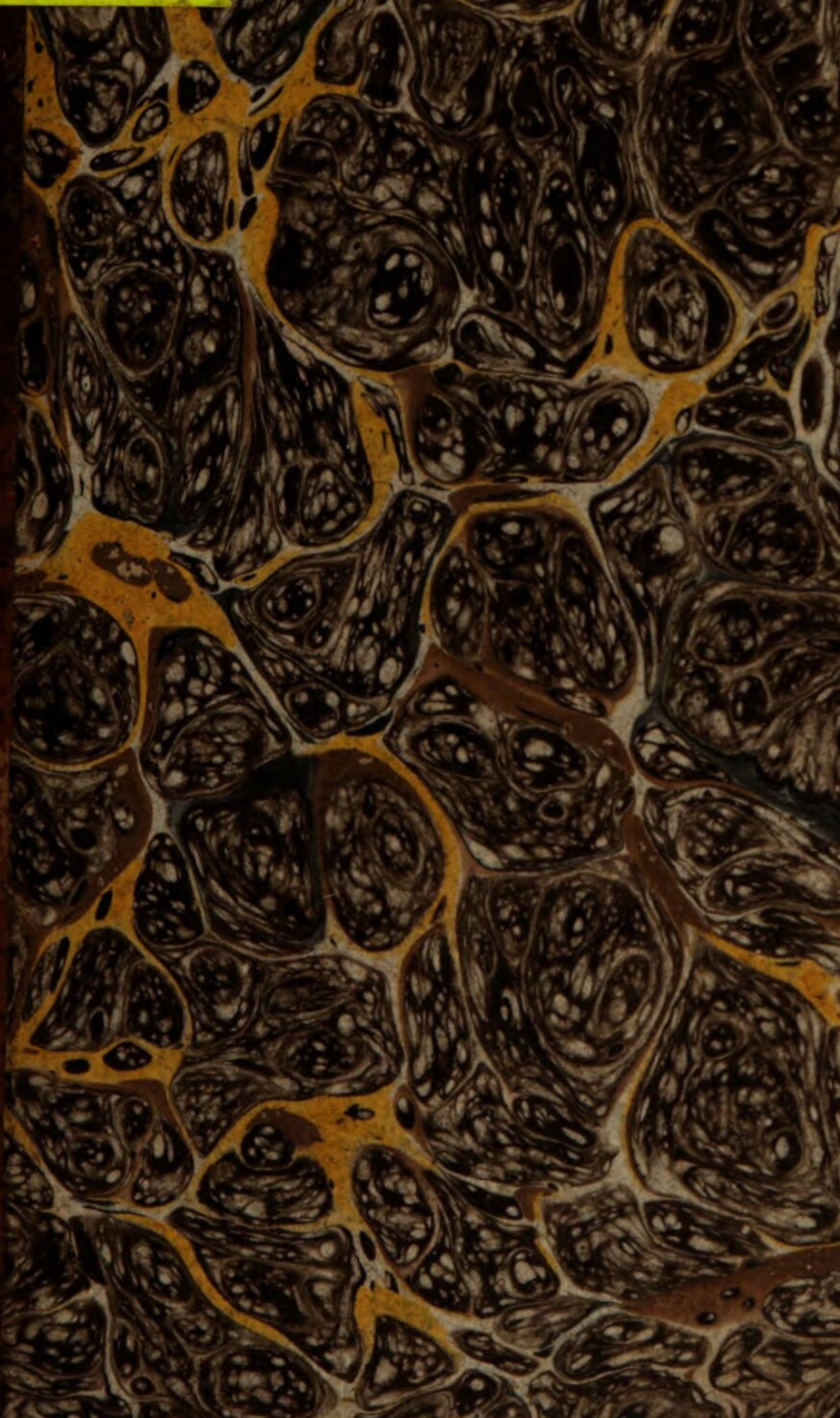


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Essay on Man
(and)
Essay on Criticism
By
Alexander Pope.



Parv.
Published
by *Parsons and Galignani.*

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Staatsbibliothek
München**

AN ESSAY ON MAN.

EPISTLE I.

OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN WITH
RESPECT TO THE UNIVERSE.

THE ARGUMENT.

Of Man in the abstract — I. That we can judge only with regard to our own system, being ignorant of the relations of systems and things — II. That Man is not to be deemed imperfect, but a being suited to his place and rank in the creation, agreeable to the general order of things, and conformable to ends and relations to him unknown—III. That it is partly upon his ignorance of future events, and partly upon the hope of a future state, that all his happiness in the present depends—IV. The pride of aiming at more knowledge, and pretending to more perfection, the cause of Man's error and misery. The impiety of putting himself in the place of God, and judging of the fitness or unfitness, perfection or imperfection, justice or injustice, of his dispensations—V. The absurdity of conceiving himself the final cause of the creation, or expecting that perfection in the moral world which is not in the natural —VI. The unreasonableness of his complaints against Providence, while, on the one hand, he demands the perfections of the angels, and, on the other, the bodily qualifications of the brutes ; though to possess any of the sensitive faculties in a higher degree would render him miserable—VII. That throughout the whole visible

world an universal order and gradation in the sensual and mental faculties is observed, which causes a subordination of creature to creature, and of all creatures to Man—The gradations of sense, instinct, thought, reflexion, reason; that reason alone countervails all the other faculties—VIII. How much further this order and subordination of living creatures may extend above and below us; were any part of which broken, not that part only, but the whole connected creation, must be destroyed—IX. The extravagance, madness, and pride, of such a desire—X. The consequence of all, the absolute submission due to Providence, both as to our present and future state.

AWAKE, my St. John! leave all meaner things
 To low ambition and the pride of kings.
 Let us (since life can little more supply
 Than just to look about us and to die)
 Expatiate free o'er all this scene of Man;
 A mighty maze! but not without a plan;
 A wild, where weeds and flow'rs promiscuous
 Or garden, tempting with forbidden fruit. [shoot,
 Together let us beat this ample field,
 Try what the open, what the covert yield:
 The latent tracts, the giddy heights explore
 Of all who blindly creep, or sightless soar;
 Eye Nature's walks, shoot folly as it flies,
 And catch the manners living as they rise;
 Laugh where we must, be candid where we can,
 But vindicate the ways of God to Man.

I. Say first, of God above or Man below,
 What can we reason but from what we know?

Of Man, what see we but his station here,
From which to reason or to which refer?
Thro' worlds unnumber'd tho' the God be known,
'Tis ours to trace him only in our own.
He, who thro' vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns,
What vary'd being peoples ev'ry star,
May tell why heav'n has made us as we are:
But of this frame, the bearings and the ties,
The strong connexions, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Look'd thro' ? or can a part contain the whole ?

Is the great chain that draws all to agree,
And drawn supports, upheld by God or thee ?

II. Presumptuous Man ! the reason wouldst thou
Why form'd so weak, so little, and so blind ? [find
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
Why form'd no weaker, blinder and no less ?
Ask of thy mother Earth why oaks are made
Taller and stronger than the weeds they shade !
Or ask of yonder argent fields above
Why Jove's satellites are less than Jove !

Of systems possible, if 'tis confest
That wisdom infinite must form the best,
Where all must full or not coherent be,
And all that rises rise in due degree ;
Then in the scale of reas'ning life 'tis plain,
There must be, somewhere, such a rank as man ;
And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)
Is only this, if God has plac'd him wrong ?

Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,
 May, must be right, as relative to all.
 In human works, tho' labour'd on with pain,
 A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain :
 In God's, one single can its end produce,
 Yet serves to second too some other use ;
 So Man, who here seems principal alone,
 Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown :
 Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal.
 'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.

When the proud steed shall know why Man
 restrains

His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains ;
 When the dull ox, why now he breaks the clod,
 Is now a victim, and now Egypt's god ;
 Then shall man's pride and dulness comprehend
 His actions', passions', being's use and end ;
 Why doing, suff'ring, check'd, impell'd ; and why
 This hour a slave, the next a deity.

Then say, not man's imperfect, Heav'n in fault—
 Say rather, Man's as perfect as he ought :
 His knowledge measur'd to his state and place,
 His time a moment, and a point his space.
 If to be perfect in a certain sphere
 What matter soon or late, or here or there ?
 The bless'd to-day is as completely so
 As he who was a thousand years ago.

III. Heav'n from all creatures hides the book of
 Fate,

All but the page prescrib'd—their present state :
 From brutes what men, from men what spirits know :
 Or who could suffer being here below ?

The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Pleas'd to the last he crops the flow'ry food,
And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood.
Oh! blindness to the future! kindly giv'n,
That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heav'n;
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish or a sparrow fall;
Atoms or systems into ruin hurl'd,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.

Hope humbly then, with trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore.
What future bliss he gives not thee to know,
But gives that hope to be thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is, but always to be blest.
The soul, uneasy and confin'd from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;
His soul proud Science never taught to stray
Far as the Solar Walk or Milky Way;
Yet simple nature to his hope has giv'n,
Behind the cloud-topt hill, an humbler heav'n;
Some safer world in depth of woods embrac'd,
Some happier island in the watry waste,
Where slaves once more their native land behold:
No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.
To be, contents his natural desire;
He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.

IV. Go, wiser thou, and in thy scale of sense
 Weigh thy opinion against Providence ;
 Call imperfection what thou fancy'st such ;
 Say, here he gives too little, there too much ;
 Destroy all creatures for thy sport or gust,
 Yet cry, if Man's unhappy, God's unjust :
 If Man alone engross not Heav'n's high care,
 Alone made perfect here, immortal there ;
 Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
 Rejudge his justice, be the god of God.
 In pride, in reas'ning pride, our error lies ;
 All quit their sphere, and rush into the skies.
 Pride still is aiming at the bless'd abodes ;
 Men would be angels, angels would be gods.
 Aspiring to be gods, if angels fell,
 Aspiring to be angels, men rebel :
 And who but wishes to invert the laws
 Of Order, sins against th' Eternal cause.

V. Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies shine ?
 Earth for whose use ? Pride answers, " 'Tis for mine.
 " For me kind Nature wakes her genial power,
 " Suckles each herb, and spreads out ev'ry flower ;
 " Annual for me the grape, the rose, renew
 " The juice nectarious, and the balmy dew ;
 " For me the mine a thousand treasures brings ;
 " For me health gushes from a thousand springs :
 " Seas roll to waft me, suns to light me rise ;
 " My footstool, earth, my canopy, the skies. "

But errs not Nature from this gracious end
 From burning suns when livid deaths descend,
 When earthquakes swallow, or when tempests sweep
 Towns to one grave, whole nations to the deep !

“ No,” tis reply’d; “ the first almighty cause
“ Acts not by partial but by gen’ral laws;
“ Th’ exceptions few; some change since all began;
“ And, what created perfect?—Why then, man?
If the great end be human happiness,
Then Nature deviates; and can man do less?
As much that end a constant course requires
Of show’rs and sunshines as of Man’s desires;
As much eternal springs and cloudless skies,
As men for ever temp’rate, calm, and wise.
If plagues or earthquakes break not Heav’n’s design,
Why then a Borgia or a Cataline?
Who knows but he, whose hand the lightning forms,
Who heaves old ocean, and who wings the storms;
Pours fierce ambition in a Cæsar’s mind,
Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?
From pride, from pride, our very reas’ning springs—
Account for moral as for nat’ral things:
Why charge we Heav’n in those, in these acquit?
In both, to reason right, is to submit.

Better for us, perhaps, it might appear,
Were there all harmony, all virtue here;
That never air or ocean felt the wind,
That never passion discompos’d the mind;
But all subsists by elemental strife;
And passions are the elements of life.
The gen’ral order, since the world began,
Is kept in Nature, and is kept in Man. [soar,

VI. What would this Man? Now upward will he
And, little less than angel, would be more;
Now, looking downward, just as griev’d appears
To want the strength of bulls, the fur of bears.

Made for his use all creatures if he call,
 Say what their use had he the pow'rs of all?
 Nature to these, without profusion kind,
 The proper organs, proper pow'rs assign'd;
 Each seeming want compensated of course,
 Here with degrees of swiftness, there of force;
 All in exact proportion to the state;
 Nothing to add and nothing to abate.

Each beast, each insect, happy in its own—
 Is Heav'n unkind to Man, and Man alone!
 Shall he alone, whom rational we call,
 Be pleas'd with nothing if not bless'd with all?

The bliss of Man (could Pride that blessing find!)
 Is not to act or think beyond mankind;
 No pow'rs of body or of soul to share
 But what his nature and his state can bear.
 Why has not Man a microscopic eye?
 For this plain reason, Man is not a fly.
 Say for what use were finer optics giv'n,
 T' inspect a mite, not comprehend the heav'n?
 Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,
 To smart and agonize at ev'ry pore?
 Or, quick effluvia darting thro' the brain,
 Die of a rose in aromatic pain?
 If Nature thunder'd in his op'ning ears,
 And stunn'd him with the music of the spheres,
 How would he wish that Heav'n had left him still
 The whisp'ring zephir and the purling rill!
 Who finds not Providence all good and wise,
 Alike in what it gives and what denies?

VII. Far as Creation's ample range extends
 The scale of sensual, mental pow'rs ascends:

Mark how it mounts to Man's imperial race,
From the green myriad in the peopled grass!
What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam!
Of smell, the headlong lioness between,
And hound sagacious on the tainted green!
Of hearing, from the life that fills the flood
To that which warbles thro' the vernal wood!
The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line:
In the nice bee what sense so subtly true
From pois'nous herbs extracts the healing dew!
How instinct varies in the grov'ling swine,
Compar'd, half-reas'ning elephant! with thine!
'Twixt that and reason what a nice barrier,
For ever sep'rate, yet for ever near!
Remembrance and reflexion how ally'd!
What thin partitions sense from thought divide!
And middle natures, how they long to join,
Yet never pass th' insuperable line!
Without this just gradation could they be
Subjected, these to those, or all to thee?
The pow'rs of all subdu'd by thee alone—
Is not thy reason all these pow'rs in one?

VIII. See! thro' this air, this ocean, and this earth,
All matter quick, and bursting into birth!
Above, how high progressive life may go!
Around, how wide! how deep extend below!
Vast chain of being, which from God began,
Nature ethereal, human, angel, Man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
No glass can reach; from infinite to thee!

From thee to nothing—On superior pow'rs
Were we to press, inferior might on ours;
Or in the full creation leave a void,
Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroy'd:
From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten-thousandth, breaks the chain alike.

And if each system in gradation roll,
Alike essential to th' amazing whole,
The least confusion but in one, not all
That system only, but the whole, must fall.
Let earth unbalanc'd from her orbit fly,
Planets and suns run lawless thro' the sky;
Let ruling angels from their spheres be hurl'd,
Being on being wreck'd, and world on world;
Heav'n's whole foundations to their centre nod,
And nature tremble to the throne of God.
All this dread order break—for whom? for thee?
Vile worm!—oh, madness! pride! impiety!

IX. What if the foot, ordain'd the dust to tread,
Or hand to toil, aspir'd to be the head?
What if the head, the eye, or ear, repin'd
To serve mere engines to the ruling mind?
Just as absurd for any part to claim
To be another in this gen'ral frame;
Just as absurd to mourn the tasks or pains
The great directing Mind of All ordains.

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That chang'd thro' all, and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth as in th' ethereal frame,
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow's in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;

Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent ;
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart ;
As full, as perfect, in vile Man that mourns,
As the rapt Seraph that adores and burns ;
To him no high, no low, no great, no small ;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

X. Cease then, nor Order Imperfection name ;
Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.
Know thy own point : this kind, this due degree
Of blindness, weakness, Heav'n bestows on thee.
Submit—in this or any other sphere,
Secure to be as bless'd as thou canst bear ;
Safe in the hand of one disposing Pow'r,
Or in the natal or the mortal hour.
All nature is but art unknown to thee ;
All chance direction, which thou canst not see ;
All discord, harmony not understood ;
All partial evil, universal good :
And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear—*Whatever is, is right.*



EPISTLE II.

OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN WITH
RESPECT TO HIMSELF AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

THE ARGUMENT.

I. The business of Man not to pry into God, but to study himself : his middle nature ; his powers and frailties—The limits of his capacity—II. The two principles of Man, self-love and reason, both necessary—Self-love the stronger, and why—Their end the same—III. The passions, and their use—The predominant passion, and its force—Its necessity, in directing Men to different purposes—Its providential use in fixing our principle, and ascertaining our virtue—IV. Virtue and vice joined in our mixed nature ; the limits near, yet the things separate and evident ; what is the office of Reason.—V. How odious vice in itself, and how we deceive ourselves into it—VI. That, however, the ends of Providence and general good are answered in our passions and imperfections — How usefully these are distributed to all orders of men—How useful they are to society, and to individuals, in every state, and every age, of life.

I. KNOW then thyself, presume not God to scan ;
The proper study of mankind is Man.
Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise and rudely great ;
With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,

He hangs between, in doubt to act or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer,
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err:
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little or too much:
Chaos of thought and passion, all confus'd;
Still by himself abus'd or disabus'd;
Created half to rise and half to fall;
Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all:
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd;
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world! [guides;

Go, wondrous creature! mount where science
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;
Instruct the planets in what orbs to run;
Correct old Time, and regulate the Sun:
Go, soar with Plato to th' empyreal sphere,
To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
Or tread the mazy round his foll'wers trod,
And, quitting sense, call imitating God;
As Eastern priests in giddy circles run,
And turn their heads to imitate the sun:
Go, teach eternal Wisdom how to rule—
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!

Superior beings, when of late they saw
A mortal man unfold all Nature's law,
Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And show'd a Newton as we show an ape.

Could he, whose rules the rapid comet bind,
Describe or fix one movement of his mind?
Who saw its fires here rise, and there descend,
Explain his own beginning or his end?

Alas! what wonder! Man's superior part
Uncheck'd may rise, and climb from art to art;
But when his own great work is but begun,
What Reason weaves, by passion is undone.

Trace Science then with Modesty thy guide;
First strip off all her equipage of pride;
Deduct what is but vanity or dress,
Or learning's luxury, or idleness,
Or tricks to show the stretch of human brain,
Mere curious pleasure, or ingenious pain;
Expunge the whole, or lop th' excrescent parts
Of all our vices have created arts;
Then see how little the remaining sum,
Which serv'd the past, and must the times to come!

II. Two principles in human nature reign,
Self-love to urge, and reason to restrain;
Nor this a good, nor that a bad we call,
Each works its end, to move or govern all;
And to their proper operation still
Ascribe all good; to their improper, ill.

Self-love, the spring of motion, acts the soul;
Reason's comparing balance rules the whole.
Man but for that no action could attend,
And but for this were active to no end;
Fix'd like a plant on his peculiar spot
To draw nutrition, propagate, and rot;
Or, meteor-like, flame lawless thro' the void,
Destroying others, by himself destroy'd.

Most strength the moving principle requires;
Active its task, it prompts, impels, inspires.
Sedate and quiet the comparing lies,
Form'd but to check, delib'rate, and advise.

Self-love, still stronger, as its object's nigh,
Reason's at distance, and in prospect lie :
That sees immediate good by present sense ;
Reason, the future and the consequence.
Thicker than arguments temptations throng ;
At best more watchful this, but that more strong.
The action of the stronger to suspend,
Reason still use, to reason still attend.
Attention, habit and experience gains ;
Each strengthens reason, and self-love restrains.
Let subtle schoolmen teach these friends to fight,
More studious to divide than to unite ;
And grace and virtue, sense and reason split
With all the rash dexterity of wit.
Wits, just like fools, at war about a name,
Have full as oft no meaning, or the same.
Self-love and reason to one end aspire,
Pain their aversion, pleasure their desire ;
But greedy that its object would devour,
This taste the honey, and not wound the flow'r :
Pleasure, or wrong or rightly understood,
Our greatest evil or our greatest good.

III. Modes of self-love the passions we may call ;
'Tis real good, or seeming, moves them all :
But since not ev'ry good we can divide,
And reason bids us for our own provide,
Passions, tho' selfish, if their means be fair,
List under Reason, and deserve her care ;
Those that imparted court a nobler aim,
Exalt their kind, and take some virtue's name.

In lazy apathy let Stoics boast
Their virtue fix'd ; 'tis fix'd as in a frost ;

Contracted all, retiring to the breast ;
But strength of mind is exercise, not rest ;
The rising tempest puts in act the soul ;
Parts it may ravage, but preserves the whole.
On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but passion is the gale ;
Nor God alone in the still calm we find,
He mounts the storm, and walks upon the wind.

Passions, like elements, tho' born to fight,
Yet mix'd and soften'd in his work unite :
These 'tis enough to temper and employ ;
But what composes Man can Man destroy.
Suffice that Reason keep to Nature's road ;
Subject, compound them ; follow her and God.
Love, Hope, and Joy, fair Pleasure's smiling train ;
Hate, Fear, and Grief, the family of Pain—
These, mix'd with art, and to due bounds confin'd,
Make and maintain the balance of the mind ;
The lights and shades, whose well accorded strife
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.

Pleasures are ever in our hands or eyes,
And, when in act they cease, in prospect rise ;
Present to grasp, and future still to find,
The whole employ of body and of mind.
All spread their charms, but charms not all alike ;
On different senses different objects strike :
Hence different passions more or less inflame,
As strong or weak the organs of the frame ;
And hence one master-passion in the breast,
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.

As man, perhaps, the moment of his breath
Receives the lurking principle of death,

The young disease, that must subdue at length,
Grows with his growth and strengthens with his
So, cast and mingled with his very frame, [strength;
The mind's disease, its ruling passion came;
Each vital humour which should feed the whole
Soon flows to this, in body and in soul:
Whatever warms the heart or fills the head,
As the mind opens and its functions spread,
Imagination plies her dang'rous art,
And pours it all upon the peccant part.

Nature its mother, Habit is its nurse;
Wit, spirit, faculties, but make it worse;
Reason itself but gives it edge and pow'r,
As heav'n's blest beam turns vinegar more sour.

We wretched subjects, tho' to lawful sway,
In this weak queen, some fav'rite still obey:
Ah! if she lend not arms as well as rules,
What can she more than tell us we are fools!
Teach us to mourn our nature, not to mend;
A sharp accuser, but a helpless friend!
Or from a judge turn pleader, to persuade
The choice we make, or justify it made;
Proud of an easy conquest all along,
She but removes weak passions for the strong;
So, when small humours gather to a gout,
The doctor fancies he has driv'n them out.

Yes, Nature's road must ever be preferr'd;
Reason is here no guide, but still a guard;
'Tis her's to rectify, not overthrow,
And treat this passion more as friend than foe:
A mightier Pow'r the strong direction sends,
And sev'ral men impels to sev'ral ends:

Like varying winds, by other passions tost,
This drives them constant to a certain coast.
Let pow'r or knowledge, gold or glory, please,
Or (oft more strong than all) the love of ease :
Thro' life 'tis follow'd, ev'n at life's expence,
The merchant's toil, the sage's indolence,
The monk's humility, the hero's pride ;
All, all alike, find Reason on their side.

Th' eternal Art, educing good from ill,
Grafts on this passion our best principle :
'Tis thus the Mercury of Man is fix'd ;
Strong grows the virtue with his nature mix'd ;
The dross cements what else were too refin'd,
And in one int'rest body acts with mind.
As fruits, ungrateful to the planter's care,
On savage stocks inserted learn to bear,
The surest virtues thus from passions shoot,
Wild Nature's vigour working at the root.
What crops of wit and honesty appear
From spleen, from obstinacy, hate, or fear !
See anger, zeal, and fortitude supply ;
Ev'n av'rice, prudence, sloth, philosophy !
Lust, thro' some certain strainers well refin'd,
Is gentle love, and charms all womankind ;
Envy, to which th' ignoble mind's a slave,
Is emulation in the learn'd or brave ;
Nor virtue, male or female, can we name,
But what will grow on pride, or grow on shame.

Thus nature gives us (let it check our pride)
The virtue nearest to our vice ally'd :
Reason the bias turns to good from ill,
And Nero reigns a Titus if he will.

The fiery soul abhor'd in Cataline,
In Decius charms, in Curtius is divine:
The same ambition can destroy or save,
And make a patriot as it makes a knave.

IV. This light and darkness, in our chaos join'd
What shall divide? The God within the mind.

Extremes in Nature equal ends produce;
In Man they join to some mysterious use;
Tho' each by turns the other's bound invade,
As in some well-wrought picture, light and shade,
And oft so mix, the difference is too nice
Where ends the virtue or begins the vice.

Fools! who from hence into the notion fall,
That vice or virtue there is none at all.
If white and black blend, soften, and unite
A thousand ways, is there no black or white?
Ask your own heart, and nothing is so plain;
'Tis to mistake them costs the time and pain.

V. Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.
But where th' extreme of vice was ne'er agreed:
Ask where's the North? at York, 'tis on the Tweed;
In Scotland, at the Orcades; and there
At Greenland, Zembla, or the Lord knows where.
No creature owns it in the first degree,
But thinks his neighbour further gone than he;
Ev'n those who dwell beneath its very zone,
Or never feel the rage, or never own;
What happier natures shrink at with affright,
The hard inhabitant contends is right.

Virtuous and vicious ev'ry man must be,
Few in th' extreme, but all in the degree:
The rogue and fool, by fits, is fair and wise,
And ev'n the best, by fits, what they despise.
'Tis but by parts we follow good or ill;
For, vice or virtue, self directs it still;
Each individual seeks a sev'ral goal;
But Heav'n's great view is one, and that the whole;
That counterworks each folly and caprice;
That disappoints th' effect of ev'ry vice;
That happy frailties to all ranks apply'd,
Shame to the virgin, to the matron pride;
Fear to the statesman, rashness to the chief,
To kings presumption, and to crowds belief:
That virtue's ends from vanity can raise,
Which seeks no int'rest, no reward but praise;
And builds on wants, and on defects of mind,
The joy, the peace, the glory of mankind.

Heav'n, forming each on other to depend,
A master, or a servant, or a friend,
Bids each on other for assistance call,
Till one man's weakness grows the strength of all.
Wants, frailties, passions closer still ally
The common int'rest, or endear the tie.
To these we owe true friendship, love sincere,
Each home-felt joy that life inherits here;
Yet from the same we learn in its decline,
Those joys, those loves, those int'rests to resign;
Taught, half by reason, half by mere decay,
To welcome death, and calmly pass away.

Whate'er the passion, knowledge, fame or pelf,
Not one will change his neighbour with himself.

The learn'd is happy Nature to explore,
The fool is happy that he knows no more ;
The rich is happy in the plenty giv'n,
The poor contents him with the care of heav'n.
See the blind beggar dance, the criples sing,
The sot a hero, lunatic a king ;
The starving chymist in his golden views,
Supremely bless'd the poet in his Muse.

See some strange comfort ev'ry state attend,
And pride, bestow'd on all, a common friend :
See some fit passion ev'ry age supply,
Hope travels thro', nor quits us when we die.

Behold the child, by Nature's kindly law
Pleas'd with a rattle, tickled with a straw :
Some livelier play-thing gives his youth delight,
A little louder, but as empty quite :
Scarfs, garters, gold, amuse his riper stage,
And beads and pray'r-books are the toys of age :
Pleas'd with this bauble still, as that before,
Till tir'd he sleeps, and life's poor play is o'er.

Meanwhile opinion gilds with varying rays
Those painted clouds that beautify our days ;
Each want of happiness by hope supply'd,
And each vacuity of sense by pride :
These build as fast as knowledge can destroy ;
In Folly's cup still laughs the bubble joy ;
One prospect lost, another still we gain,
And not a vanity is giv'n in vain :
Ev'n mean self-love becomes, by force divine,
The scale to measure other wants by thine.
See ! and confess, one comfort still must rise—
'Tis this—tho' Man's a fool, yet God is wise.

EPISTLE III.

OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN WITH
RESPECT TO SOCIETY.~~~~~
THE ARGUMENT.

I. The whole universe one system of society—Nothing made wholly for itself, nor yet wholly for another—
—The happiness of animals mutual—II. Reason or instinct operates alike to the good of each individual—
Reason or instinct operates also to society in all animals
III. How far society is carried by instinct. How much farther by reason—IV. Of that which is called the state of Nature. Reason instructed by instinct in the invention of arts, and in the forms of society—V. Origin of political societies. Origin of monarchy. Patriarchal government. VI. Origin of true religion and government from the same principle of love. Origin of superstition and tyranny, from the same principle of fear. The influence of self-love operating to the social and public good. Restoration of true religion and government on their first principle. Mixed government. Various forms of each, and the true end of all.

HERE then we rest : “ The Universal Cause
“ Acts to one end, but acts by various laws.”
In all the madness of superfluous health,
The train of pride, the impudence of wealth,
Let this great truth be present night and day,
But most be present if we preach or pray.

I. Look round our world, behold the chain of love
Combining all below and all above.
See plastic Nature working to this end,
The single atoms each to other tend;
Attract, attracted to the next in place,
Form'd and impell'd its neighbour to embrace.
See matter next, with various life endued,
Press to one centre still, the gen'ral good :
See dying vegetables life sustain,
See life dissolving vegetate again.
All forms that perish other forms supply ;
By turns we catch the vital breath, and die:
Like bubbles on the sea of matter borne,
They rise, they break, and to that sea return.
Nothing is foreign : parts relate to whole ;
One all-extending, all-preserving soul
Connects each being, greatest with the least,
Made beast in aid of Man, and Man of beast.
All serv'd, all serving : nothing stands alone ;
The chain holds on, and where it ends unknown.
Has God, thou fool ! work'd solely for thy good,
Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food ?
Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn,
For him as kindly spreads the flow'ry lawn :
Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings ?
Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings.
Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat ?
Loves of his own and raptures swell the note.
The bounding steed you pompously bestride
Shares with his lord the pleasure and the pride.
Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain ?
The birds of heav'n shall vindicate their grain.

Thine the full harvest of the golden year!
Part pays, and justly, the deserving steer:
The hog that ploughs not, nor obeys thy call,
Lives on the labours of this lord of all.

Know, Nature's children, all divide her care;
The fur that warms a monarch warm'd a bear.
While man exclaims: "See all things for my use!"
"See Man for mine!" replies a pamper'd goose.
And just as short of reason he must fall,
Who thinks all made for one, not one for all.

Grant that the pow'rful still the weak controul;
Be Man the wit and tyrant of the whole;
Nature that tyrant checks; he only knows
And helps another creature's wants and woes.
Say will the falcon, stooping from above,
Smit with her varying plumage, spare the dove?
Admires the jay the insect's gilded wings?
Or hears the hawk when Philomela sings?
Man cares for all: to birds he gives his woods,
To beasts his pastures, and to fish his floods;
For some his int'rest prompts him to provide,
For more his pleasure, yet for more his pride:
All feed on one vain patron, and enjoy
Th' extensive blessing of his luxury.
That very life his learned hunger craves,
He saves from famine, from the savage saves;
Nay feasts the animal he dooms his feast,
And, till he ends the being, makes it blest,
Which sees no more the stroke, or feels the pain,
Than favour'd Man by touch ethereal slain.
The creature had his feast of life before;
Thou, too, must perish when thy feast is o'er!

To each unthinking being Heav'n, a friend,
Gives not the useless knowledge of its end!
To man imparts it, but with such a view
As, while he dreads it, makes him hope it too:
The hour conceal'd, and so remote the fear,
Death still draws nearer, never seeming near.
Great standing miracle! that Heav'n assign'd
Its only thinking thing this turn of mind.

II. Whether with reason or with instinct blest,
Know all enjoy that pow'r which suits them best:
To bliss alike by that direction tend,
And find the means proportion'd to their end.
Say, where full instinct is th' unerring guide,
What pope or council can they need beside?
Reason, however able, cool at best,
Cares not for service, or but serves when prest;
Stays till we call, and then not often near;
But honest instinct comes a volunteer,
Sure never to o'ershoot, but just to hit,
While still too wide or short is human wit;
Sure by quick Nature happiness to gain,
Which heavier reason labours at in vain.
This too serves always, reason never long;
One must go right, the other may go wrong.
See then the acting and comparing pow'rs
One in their nature, which are two in ours;
And reason raise o'er instinct as you can,
In this 'tis God directs, in that 'tis Man.

Who taught the nations of the field and wood
To shun their poison, and to choose their food?
Prescient, the tides or tempests to withstand,
Build on the wave, or arch beneath the sand?

Who made the spider parallels design,
Sure as De Moivre, without rule or line?
Who bid the stork, Columbus-like, explore
Heav'ns not his own, and worlds unknown before?
Who calls the council, states the certain day,
Who forms the phalanx, and who points the way?

III. God, in the nature of each being, founds
Its proper bliss, and sets its proper bounds :
But as he fram'd a whole the whole to bless,
On mutual wants built mutual happiness ;
So from the first eternal Order ran,
And creature link'd to creature, Man to Man.
Whate'er of life all-quick'ning æther keeps,
Or breathes thro' air, or shoots beneath the deeps,
Or pours profuse on earth, one nature feeds
The vital flame, and swells the genial seeds.
Not Man alone, but all that roam the wood,
Or wing the sky, or roll along the flood,
Each loves itself, but not itself alone ;
Each sex desires alike till two are one.
Nor ends the pleasure with the fierce embrace ;
They love themselves a third time in their race.
Thus beast and bird their common charge attend,
The mothers nurse it, and the sires defend ;
The young dismiss'd to wander earth or air,
There stops the instinct, and there ends the care ;
The link dissolves, each seeks a fresh embrace ;
Another love succeeds another race.
A longer care Man's helpless kind demands ;
That longer care contracts more lasting bands :
Reflection, reason, still the ties improve,
At once extend the int'rest and the love ;

With choice we fix, with sympathy we burn ;
Each virtue in each passion takes its turn ;
And still new needs, new helps, new habits rise,
That graft benevolence on charities.
Still as one brood and as another rose,
These nat'ral love maintain, habitual those :
The last scarce ripen'd into perfect Man,
Saw helpless him from whom their life began :
Mem'ry and forecast just returns engage,
That pointed back to youth, this on to age ;
While pleasure, gratitude, and hope, combin'd,
Still spread the int'rest, and preserv'd the kind.

IV. Nor think in Nature's state they blindly trod ;
The state of Nature was the reign of God ;
Self-love and social at her birth began,
Union the bond of all things, and of Man.
Pride then was not, nor arts, that pride to aid ;
Man walk'd with beasts, joint tenant of the shade ;
The same his table, and the same his bed ;
No murder cloth'd him, and no murder fed ;
In the same temple, the resounding wood,
All vocal beings hymn'd their equal God :
The shrine with gore unstain'd, with gold undrest,
Unbrib'd, unbloody, stood the blameless priest :
Heav'n's attribute was universal care,
And Man's prerogative to rule, but spare.
Ah ! how unlike the Man of times to come !
Of half that live the butcher and the tomb :
Who, foe to nature, hears the gen'ral groan,
Murders their species, and betrays his own.
But just disease to luxury succeeds,
And ev'ry death its own avenger breeds ;

The fury passions from that blood began,
And turn'd on Man a fiercer savage—Man.

See him from nature rising slow to art!

To copy instinct then was Reason's part:

Thus then to Man the voice of nature spake—

“Go, from the creatures thy instructions take:

“Learn from the birds what food the thickets
yield;

“Learn from the beasts the physic of the field;

“Thy art of building from the bee receive;

“Learn of the mole to plough, the worm to weave;

“Learn of the little nautilus to sail,

“Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.

“Here, too, all forms of social union find,

“And hence let reason, late, instruct mankind:

“Here subterranean works and cities see;

“There towns aerial on the waving tree,

“Learn each small people's genius, policies,

“The ant's republic, and the realm of bees;

“How those in common all their wealth bestow,

“And anarchy without confusion know;

“And these for ever, tho' a monarch reign,

“Their sep'rate cells and properties maintain.

“Mark what unvary'd laws preserve each state,

“Laws wise as Nature, and as fix'd as Fate.

“In vain thy reason finer webs shall draw,

“Entangle justice in her net of law.

“And right, too rigid, harden into wrong,

“Still for the strong too weak, the weak too
strong.

“Yet go, and thus o'er all the creatures sway,

“Thus let the wiser make the rest obey;

“ And for those arts mere instinct could afford,
 “ Be crown’d as monarchs, or as gods ador’d. ”

V. Great Nature spoke ; observant Man obey’d ;
 Cities were built, societies were made :
 Here rose one little state ; another near
 Grew by like means, and join’d thro’ love or fear.
 Did here the trees with ruddier burdens bend,
 And there the streams in purer rills descend.
 What war could ravish, commerce could bestow,
 And he return’d a friend who came a foe.
 Converse and love mankind might strongly draw,
 When love was liberty, and Nature law.
 Thus states were form’d, the name of king unknown,
 Till common int’rest placed the sway in one.
 ’Twas virtue only (or in arts or arms
 Diffusing blessings, or averting harms)
 The same which in a sire the sons obey’d,
 A prince the father of a people made. [sate

VI. Till then, by Nature crown’d, each patriarch
 King, priest, and parent of his growing state ;
 On him their second Providence they hung ;
 Their law his eye, their oracle his tongue.
 He from the wand’ring furrow call’d the food,
 Taught to command the fire, controul the flood,
 Draw forth the monsters of th’ abyss profound,
 Or fetch th’ aerial eagle to the ground ;
 Till drooping, sick’ning, dying they began,
 Whom they rever’d as God, to mourn as Man :
 Then, looking up from sire to sire, explor’d
 One great first father, and that first ador’d :
 Or plain tradition that this All begun,
 Convey’d unbroken faith from sire to son ;

The worker from the work distinct was known,
And simple reason never sought but one.
Ere wit oblique had broke that steady light,
Man, like his Maker, saw that all was right;
To virtue in the paths of pleasure trod,
And own'd a Father when he own'd a God.
Love all the faith and all th' allegiance then;
For Nature knew no right divine in Men,
No ill could fear in God; and understood
A sov'reign being but a sov'reign good.
True faith, true policy, united ran;
That was but love of God, and this of Man.

Who first taught souls enslav'd, and realms
undone,
Th' enormous faith of many made for one;
That proud exception to all Nature's laws,
T' invert the world, and counterwork its cause?
Force first made conquest, and that conquest law,
Till Superstition taught the tyrant awe,
Then shar'd the tyranny, then lent it aid,
And gods of conqu'rors, slaves of subjects, made:
She midst the lightning's blaze and thunder's sound,
When rock'd the mountains and when groan'd the
ground,
She taught the weak to bend, the proud to pray,
To pow'r unseen, and mightier far than they;
She from the rending earth and bursting skies
Saw gods descend, and fiends infernal rise;
Here fix'd the dreadful, there the blest abodes;
Fear made her devils, and weak hope her gods;
Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust;

Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And, form'd like tyrants, tyrants would believe.
Zeal then, not charity, became the guide,
And hell was built on spite, and heav'n on pride :
Then sacred seem'd th' ethereal vault no more ;
Altars grew marble then, and reek'd with gore :
Then first the Flamen tasted living food,
Next his grim idol smear'd with human blood ;
With heav'n's own thunders shook the world below,
And play'd the god an engine on his foe.

So drives self-love thro' just and thro' unjust,
To one man's pow'r, ambition, lucre, lust :
The same self-love, in all becomes the cause
Of what restrains him, government and laws.
For, what one likes, if others like as well,
What serves one will, when many wills rebel ?
How shall he keep, what, sleeping or awake,
A weaker may surprise, a stronger take ;
His safety must his liberty restrain ;
All join to guard what each desires to gain.
Forc'd into virtue, thus by self-defence,
Ev'n kings learn'd justice and benevolence :
Self-love forsook the path it first pursu'd,
And found the private in the public good.

'Twas then the studious head or gen'rous mind,
Foll'wer of God, or friend of human kind,
Poet or patriot, rose but to restore
The faith and moral nature gave before ;
Relum'd her ancient light, not kindled new ;
If not God's image, yet his shadow drew ;
Taught pow'r's due use to people and to kings,
Taught nor to slack nor strain its tender strings.

The less or greater set so justly true,
That touching one must strike the other too ;
Till jarring int'rests of themselves create
Th' according music of a well-mix'd state.
Such is the world's great harmony, that springs
From order, union, full consent of things ; [made
Where small and great, where weak and mighty,
To serve, not suffer, strengthen, not invade ;
More pow'rful each as needful to the rest,
And in proportion as it blesses blest ;
Draw to one point, and to one centre bring
Beast, man, or angel, servant, lord, or king.

For forms of government let fools contest ;
Whate'er is best administer'd, is best.
For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight ;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.
In faith and hope the world will disagree,
But all mankind's concern is charity :
All must be false that thwart this one great end ;
And all of God, that bless mankind, or mend.

Man, like the gen'rous vine, supported lives ;
The strength he gains is from th' embrace he gives.
On their own axis as the planets run,
Yet make at once their circle round the sun ;
So two consistent motions act the soul,
And one regards itself, and one the whole.

Thus god and nature link'd the gen'ral frame,
And bade self-love and social be the same.



EPISTLE IV.

OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN WITH
RESPECT TO HAPPINESS.

THE ARGUMENT.

- I. False notions of happiness, philosophical and popular, answered—II. It is the end of all Men, and attainable by all. God intends happiness to be equal; and, to be so, it must be social, since all particular happiness depends on general, and since he governs by general not particular laws. As it is necessary for order, and the peace, and welfare of society, that external goods should be unequal, happiness is not made to consist in these. But, notwithstanding that inequality, the balance of happiness among mankind is kept even by Providence, by the two passions of hope and fear—III. What the happiness of individuals is, as far as is consistent with the constitution of this world: and that the good Man has here the advantage. The error of imputing to virtue what are only the calamities of nature, or of fortune—IV. The folly of expecting that God should alter his general laws in favour of particulars—V. That we are not judges who are good; but that whoever they are, they must be happiest—VI. That external goods are not the proper rewards, but often inconsistent with, or destructive of, virtue. That even these can make no man happy without virtue; instanced in riches—honours—nobility—greatness—fame—superior talents—with pictures of human infelicity in men possessed of them all—VII. That virtue only constitutes a happiness whose object is universal,

and whose prospect eternal. That the perfection of virtue and happiness consists in a conformity to the order of Providence here, and a resignation to it here and hereafter.

OH, happiness! our being's end and aim!
Good, pleasure, ease, content!—whate'er thy name:
That something still which prompts th' eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, or dare to die;
Which still so near us, yet beyond us lies,
O'erlook'd, seen double, by the fool and wise.
Plant of celestial seed! if dropp'd below,
Say in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow!
Fair op'ning to some courts propitious shine,
Or deep with di'monds in the flaming mine?
Twin'd with the wreaths Parnassian laurels yield,
Or reap'd in iron harvests of the field?
Where grows!—where grows it not! If vain our toil,
We ought to blame the culture, not the soil;
Fix'd to no spot is happiness sincere;
'Tis no where to be found, or ev'ry where:
'Tis never to be bought, but always free,
And fled from monarchs, St. John! dwells with
thee.

Ask of the learn'd the way; the learn'd are blind:
This bids to serve, and that to shun mankind;
Some place the bliss in action, some in ease;
Those call it pleasure, and contentment these;
Some, sunk to beasts, find pleasure end in pain;
Some swell'd to gods, confess ev'n virtue vain!
Or indolent, to each extreme they fall,
To trust in ev'ry thing, or doubt of all.

Who thus define it, say they more or less
Than this, that happiness is happiness!

Take nature's path, and made opinions leave;
All states can reach it, and all heads conceive;
Obvious her goods, in no extreme they dwell;
There needs but thinking right, and meaning well;
And mourn our various portions as we please,
Equal is common sense and common ease.

Remember, Man, "the Universal Cause
"Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral laws;"
And makes what happiness we justly call
Subsist not in the good of one, but all:
There's not a blessing individuals find,
But some way leans and harkens to the kind,
No bandit fierce, no tyrant mad with pride,
No cavern'd hermit, rests self-satisfy'd.
Who most to shun or hate mankind pretend,
Seek an admirer, or would fix a friend:
Abstract what others feel, what others think,
All pleasures sicken, and all glories sink;
Each has his share; and who would more obtain,
Shall find the pleasure pays not half the pain.

Order is heav'n's first law; and, this confess,
Some are and must be greater than the rest;
More rich, more wise: but who infers from hence,
That such are happier, shocks all common sense.
Heav'n to mankind impartial we confess,
If all are equal in their happiness:
But mutual wants this happiness increase;
All nature's difference keeps all nature's peace.
Condition, circumstance, is not the thing:
Bliss is the same, in subject or in king;

In who obtain defence, or who defend,
In him who is, or him who finds a friend.
Heav'n breathes thro' ev'ry member of the whole
One common blessing, as one common soul.
But fortune's gifts, if each alike possest,
And each were equal, must not all contest?
If then to all men happiness was meant,
God in externals could not place content.

Fortune her gift may variously dispose,
And these be happy call'd, unhappy those;
But heav'n's just balance equal will appear,
While those are plac'd in hope and these in fear:
Not present good or ill the joy or curse,
But future views of better or of worse.

Oh! sons of earth! attempt ye still to rise,
By mountains pil'd on mountains, to the skies?
Heav'n still with laughter the vain toil surveys,
And buries madmen in the heaps they raise.

Know all the good that individuals find,
Or god and nature meant to mere mankind,
Reason's whole pleasure, all the joys of sense,
Lie in three words—Health, Peace, and Competence.
But health consists with temperance alone;
And Peace, o virtue! Peace is all thy own.
The good or bad the gifts of fortune gain;
But these less taste them as they worse obtain.
Say, in pursuit of profit or delight,
Who risk the most, that take wrong means, or right?
Of vice, or virtue, whether blest or curst,
Which meets contempt, or which compassion first?
Count all th' advantage prosp'rous vice attains,
'Tis but what virtue flies from, and disdains:

And grant the bad what happiness they would,
One they must want, which is to pass for good.

Oh ! blind to truth , and God's whole scheme
Who fancy bliss to vice, to virtue woe ! [below,
Who sees and follows that great scheme the best,
Best knows the blessing, and will most be blest.
But fools the good alone unhappy call,
For ills or accidents that chance to all.
See Falkland dies, the virtuous and the just !
See Godlike Turenne prostrate on the dust !
See Sidney bleeds amid the martial strife !
Was this their virtue or contempt of life ?
Say, was it virtue, more tho' heav'n ne'er gave,
Lamented Digby ! sunk thee to the grave !
Tell me, if virtue made the son expire,
Why full of days and honour lives the sire ?
Why drew Marseilles' good bishop purer breath,
When nature sicken'd, and each gale was death ?
Or why so long (in life if long can be)
Lent heav'n a parent to the poor and me ?

What makes all physical or moral ill ?
There deviates nature, and here wanders will.
God sends not ill, if rightly understood,
Or partial ill is universal good ;
Or change admits, or nature lets it fall,
Short and but rare, till Man improv'd it all.
We just as wisely might of heav'n complain,
That righteous Abel was destroy'd by Cain,
As that the virtuous son is ill at ease
When his lewd father gave the dire disease.
Think we, like some weak prince, th' Eternal Cause
Prone for his fav'rites to reverse his laws !

Shall burning *Ætna*, if a sage requires,
Forget to thunder, and recal her fires?
On air or sea new motions be imprest,
Oh, blameless *Bethel*! to relieve thy breast?
When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?
Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,
For *Chartres*' head reserve the hanging wall?

But still this world (so fitted for the knave)
Contents us not—A better shall we have!
A kingdom of the just then let it be;
But first, consider how these just agree.
The good must merit God's peculiar care;
But who but God can tell us who they are?
One thinks on *Calvin* heav'n's own spirit fell;
Another deems him instrument of hell;
If *Calvin* feel heav'n's blessing or its rod,
This cries, there is, and that, there is no God.
What shocks one part will edify the rest;
Nor with one system can they all be blest.
The very best will variously incline,
And what rewards your virtue, punish mine.
Whatever is, is right—This world, 'tis true,
Was made for *Cæsar*—but for *Titus* too:
And which more blest? who chain'd his country, say,
Or he whose virtue sigh'd to lose a day?

“But sometimes virtue starves while vice is fed.”
What then? is the reward of virtue bread?
That vice may merit; 'tis the price of toil;
The knave deserves it, when he tills the soil.
The knave deserves it, when he tempts the main,
Where folly fights for kings, or dives for gain.

The good man may be weak, be indolent ;
Nor is his claim to plenty, but content.
But grant him riches, your demand is o'er! [pow'r!"
"No—shall the good want health, the good want
Add health and pow'r, and ev'ry earthly thing;
"Why bounded power! why private! why no king!"
Nay, why external for internal giv'n?
Why is not Man a god, and earth a heav'n?
Who ask and reason thus, will scarce conceive
God gives enough while he has more to give :
Immense the pow'r, immense were the demand ;
Say, at what part of nature will they stand ?
What nothing earthly gives or can destroy,
The soul's calm sunshine and the heart-felt joy,
Is virtue's prise. A better would you fix?
Then give Humility a coach and six,
Justice a conqu'ror's sword, or Truth a gown,
Or Public Spirit its great cure a crown.
Weak, foolish Man! will heav'n reward us there
With the same trash mad mortals wish for here?
The Boy and Man an individual makes,
Yet sigh'st thou now for apples and for cakes?
Go like the Indian, in another life
Expect thy dog, thy bottle, and thy wife,
As well as dream such trifles are assign'd,
As toys and empires, for a godlike mind :
Rewards that either would to virtue bring
No joy, or be destructive of the thing.
How oft by these at sixty are undone
The virtues of a saint at twenty-one!
To whom can riches give repute or trust,
Content or pleasure, but the good and just!

Judges and senates have been bought for gold ;
Esteem and love were never to be sold.
Oh, fool ! to think God hates the worthy mind,
The lover, and the love of human-kind,
Whose life is healthful, and whose conscience clear,
Because he wants a thousand pounds a-year.

Honour and shame from no condition rise ;
Act well your part ; there all the honour lies.
Fortune in men has some small difference made,
One flaunts in rags, one flutters in brocade ;
The cobbler apron'd, and the parson gown'd,
The friar hooded, and the monarch crown'd.
“What differ more, you cry, than crown and cowl !”
I'll tell you, friend, a wise man and a fool.
You'll find if once the monarch acts the monk,
Or, cobbler-like, the parson will be drunk,
Worth makes the man, and want of it, the fellow ;
The rest is all but leather, or prunello.

Stuck o'er with titles, and hung round with strings,
That thou may'st be by kings, or whores of kings,
Boast the pure blood of an illustrious race,
In quiet flow from Lucrece to Lucrece :
But by your fathers' worth, if yours you rate,
Count me those only who were good and great.
Go ! if your ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept thro' scoundrels ever since the flood,
Go ! and pretend your family is young,
Nor own your fathers have been fools so long.
What can ennoble sots, or slaves or cowards ?
Alas ! not all the blood of all the Howards.

Look next on greatness ; say where greatness lies !
“Where, but among the heroes and the wise !”

Heroes are much the same, the point's agreed,
From Macedonia's madman to the Swede ;
The whole strange purpose of their lives to find,
Or make an enemy of all mankind !
Not one looks backward, onward still he goes,
Yet ne'er looks forward farther than his nose.
No less alike the politic and wise ;
All sly slow things with circumspective eyes :
Men in their loose unguarded hours they take,
Not that themselves are wise, but others weak.
But grant that those can conquer, these can cheat,
'Tis phrase absurd to call a villain great :
Who wickedly is wise, or madly brave,
Is but the more a fool, the more a knave.
Who noble ends by noble means obtains,
Or failing, smiles in exile or in chains,
Like good Aurelius let him reign, or bleed
Like Socrates ; that Man is great indeed.

What's fame ! a fancy'd life in other's breath ;
A thing beyond us, ev'n before our death :
Just what you hear you have ; and what's unknown,
The same, my Lord, if Tully's or your own.
All that we feel of it begins and ends
In the small circle of our foes or friends ;
To all beside as much an empty shade,
An Eugene living, as a Cæsar dead :
Alike or when or where they shone or shine,
Or on the Rubicon, or on the Rhine.
A wit's a feather, and a chief a rod ;
An honest Man's the noblest work of God.
Fame but from death a villain's name can save,
As justice tears his body from the grave ;

When what t' oblivion better were resign'd,
Is hung on high to poison half mankind.
All fame is foreign but of true desert;
Plays round the head, but comes not to the heart:
One self-approving hour whole years outweighs,
Of stupid starers and of loud huzzas;
And more true joy Marcellus exil'd feels,
Than Cæsar with a senate at his heels.

In parts superior, what advantage lies?
Tell, for you can, what is it to be wise?
'Tis but to know how little can be known,
To see all others' faults, and feel our own;
Condemn'd in bus'ness or in arts to drudge,
Without a second, or without a judge.
Truths would you teach, or save a sinking land?
All fear, none aid you, and few understand.
Painful preeminence! yourself to view
Above life's weakness, and its comforts too.

Bring then these blessings to a strict account;
Make fair deductions; see to what they 'mount;
How much of other each is sure to cost;
How each for other oft is wholly lost;
How inconsistent greater good with these;
How sometimes life is risk'd, and always ease:
Think! and if still the things thy envy call,
Say, wouldst thou be the man to whom they fall?
To sigh for ribbands, if thou art so silly,
Mark how they grace Lord Umbra, or Sir Billy!
Is yellow dirt the passion of thy life?
Look but on Gripus, or on Gripus' wife!
If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shin'd,
The wisest, brightest, meanest, of mankind!

Or ravish'd with the whistling of a name,
See Cromwell damn'd to everlasting fame!
If all united thy ambition call,
From ancient story learn to scorn them all:
There in the rich, the honour'd, fam'd, and great,
See the false scale of happiness complete!
In hearts of kings, or arms of queens who lay,
How happy! those to ruin, these betray.
Mark by what wretched steps their glory grows,
From dirt and sea-weed, as proud Venice rose;
In each how guilt and greatness equal ran,
And all that rais'd the hero sunk the man:
Now Europe's laurels on their brows behold,
But stain'd with blood, or ill exchange'd for gold.
Then see them broke with toils, or sunk in ease,
Or infamous for plunder'd provinces.
Oh, wealth ill-fated! which no act of fame
E'er taught to shine or sanctifi'd from shame!
What greater bliss attends their close of life?
Some greedy minion, or imperious wife.
The trophy'd arches, story'd halls invade,
And haunt their slumbers in the pompous shade.
Alas! not dazzled with their noon-tide ray,
Compute the morn and ev'ning to the day;
The whole amount of that enormous fame!
A tale that blends their glory with their shame!

Know then this truth (enough for man to know),
"Virtue alone is happiness below."

The only point where human bliss stands still,
And tastes the good without the fall to ill;
Where only merit constant pay receives,
Is bless'd in what it takes, and what it gives;

The joy unequall'd if its end it gain,
And if it lose attended with no pain :
Without satiety, tho' e'er so bless'd,
And but more relish'd as the more distress'd :
The broadest mirth unfeeling folly wears,
Less pleasing far than virtue's very tears :
Good from each object, from each place, acquir'd,
For ever exercis'd, yet never tir'd ;
Never elated, while one man's oppress'd ;
Never dejected, while another's bless'd ;
And where no wants, no wishes can remain,
Since but to wish more virtue is to gain.

See the sole bliss heav'n could on all bestow !
Which who but feels can taste, but thinks can know ;
Yet poor with fortune, and with learning blind,
The bad must miss, the good untaught will find ;
Slave to no sect, who takes no private road,
But looks thro' nature up to nature's God ;
Pursues that chain which links th' immense design,
Joins heav'n and earth, and mortal and divine ;
Sees that no being any bliss can know,
But touches some above and some below ;
Learns from this union of the rising whole,
The first last purpose of the human soul ;
And knows where faith, law, morals, all began,
All end in love of God, and love of Man.

For him alone hope leads from goal to goal,
And opens still, and opens on his soul ;
'Till lengthen'd on to faith, and unconfin'd,
It pours the bliss that fills up all the mind.
He sees why nature plants in Man alone,
Hope of known bliss, and faith in bliss unknown :

Nature! (whose dictates to no other kind
Are giv'n in vain, but what they seek they find)
Wise is her present; she connects in this
His greatest virtue, with his greatest bliss:
At once his own bright prospect to be blest,
And strongest motive to assist the rest.
Self-love thus push'd to social, to divine,
Gives thee to make thy neighbour's blessing thine.
Is this too little for thy boundless heart?
Extend it, let thy enemies have part:
Grasp the whole worlds of reason, life, and sense
In one close system of benevolence:
Happier as kinder, in whate'er degree,
And height of bliss but height of charity.

God loves from whole to parts; but human soul
Must rise from individual to the whole.
Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
The centre mov'd, a circle straight succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads;
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace;
His country next, and next all human race:
Wide and more wide, th' o'erflowings of the mind
Take ev'ry creature in of ev'ry kind:
Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,
And heav'n beholds its image in his breast.

Come then, my friend! my genius! come along!
O master of the poet and the song!
And while the Muse now stoops, or now ascends,
To Man's low passions, or their glorious ends,
Teach me, like thee, in various nature wise,
To fall with dignity, with temper rise;

Form'd by thy converse, happily to steer
From grave to gay, from lively to severe;
Correct with spirit, eloquent with ease,
Intent to reason, or polite to please.
Oh! while along the stream of time thy name
Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame,
Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?
When statesmen, heroes, kings, in dust repose,
Whose sons shall blush their fathers were thy foes,
Shall then this verse to future age pretend
Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend?
That, urg'd by thee, I turn'd the tuneful art
From sounds to things, from fancy to the heart;
For wit's false mirror held up nature's light,
Show'd erring pride whatever is, is right;
That reason, passion, answer one great aim;
That true self-love and social are the same;
That virtue only makes our bliss below,
And all our knowledge is ourselves to know.



AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

[Written in the year 1709.]

PART I.

Introduction. That it is as great a fault to judge ill as to write ill, and a more dangerous one to the public—That a true taste is as rare to be found as a true genius—That most men are born with some taste, but spoiled by false education—The multitude of critics, and causes of them—That we are to study our own taste, and know the limits of it — Nature the best guide of judgment, improved by art and rules, which are but methodized Nature—Rules derived from the practice of the ancient poets; that therefore the Ancients are necessary to be studied by a critic, particularly Homer and Virgil—Of licences, and the use of them, by the Ancients—Reverence due to the Ancients, and praise of them.

'TIS hard to say if greater want of skill
 Appear in writing or in judging ill;
 But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence,
 To tire our patience than mislead our sense:
 Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
 Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss:
 A fool might once himself alone expose;
 Now one in verse makes many more in prose.

'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
 Go just alike, yet each believes his own,
 In poets as true genius is but rare,
 True taste as seldom is the critic's share;

Both must alike from Heav'n derive their light,
 These born to judge, as well as those to write.
 Let such teach others who themselves excel,
 And censure freely who have written well.
 Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true ;
 But are not critics to their judgment too ?

Yet if we look more closely we shall find
 Most have the seeds of judgment in their mind.
 Nature affords at least a glimm'ring light ;
 The lines , tho' touch'd but faintly, are drawn
 right :

But as the slightest sketch , if justly trac'd ,
 Is by ill colouring but the more disgrac'd ,
 So by false learning is good sense defac'd :
 Some are bewilder'd in the maze of schools,
 And some made coxcombs Nature meant but fools:
 In search of wit these lose their common sense,
 And then turn critics in their own defence :
 Each burns alike, who can or cannot write,
 Or with a rival's or an eunuch's spite.
 All fools have still an itching to deride,
 And fain would be upon the laughing side.
 If Mævius scribe in Apollo's spite,
 There are who judge still worse than he can write.

Some have at first for wits, then poets, past,
 Turn'd critics next, and prov'd plain fools at last.
 Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,
 As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass.
 Those half-learn'd witlings, num'rous in our isle,
 As half-form'd insects on the banks of Nile ;
 Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,
 Their generation's so equivocal,

To tell them would a hundred tongues require,
Or one vain wit's, that might a hundred tire.

But you who seek to give and merit fame,
And justly bear a Critic's noble name,
Be sure yourself and your own reach to know,
How far your genius, taste, and learning go ;
Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet,
And mark that point where sense and dullness meet.

Nature to all things fix'd the limits fit,
And wisely curb'd proud man's pretending wit.
As on the land while here the ocean gains,
In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains,
Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
The solid pow'r of understanding fails ;
Where beams of warm imagination play,
The memory's soft figures melt away.

On science only will one genius fit ;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit :
Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
But oft in those confin'd to single parts ;
Like kings, we lose the conquests gain'd before,
By vain ambition still to make them more :
Each might his sev'ral province well command,
Would all but stoop to what they understand.

First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same :
Unerring Nature ! still divinely bright,
One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of art.
Art from that fund each just supply provides,
Works without show, and without pomp presides :

In some fair body thus th' informing soul
With spirits feeds, with vigour fills, the whole;
Each motion guides, and ev'ry nerve sustains,
Itself unseen, but in th' effect remains.
Some, to whom Heav'n in wit has been profuse,
Want as much more to turn it to its use;
For wit and judgment often are at strife,
Tho' meant each other's aid, like man and wife.
'Tis more to guide than spur the Muse's steed,
Restrain his fury, than provoke his speed:
The winged courser, like a gen'rous horse,
Shows most true mettle when you check his course.

Those rules of old, discover'd, not devis'd,
Are Nature still, but nature methodiz'd:
Nature, like liberty, is but restrained
By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

Hear how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites,
When to repress and when indulge our flights:
High on Parnassus' top her sons she show'd,
And pointed out those arduous paths they trod;
Held from afar, aloft, th' immortal prize,
And urg'd the rest by equal steps to rise.
Just precepts thus from great examples giv'n,
She drew from them what they deriv'd from Heav'n;
The gen'rous critic fann'd the poet's fire,
And taught the world with reason to admire.
Then Criticism the Muse's handmaid prov'd,
To dress her charms, and make her more belov'd;
But following wits from that intention stray'd;
Who could not win the mistress, woo'd the maid;
Against the poets their own arms they turn'd,
Sure to hate most the men from whom they learn'd.

So modern 'pothecaries, taught the art
 By doctors' bills to play the doctor's part;
 Bold in the practice of mistaken rules,
 Prescribe, apply, and call their masters fools.
 Some on the leaves of ancient authors prey;
 Nor time nor moths e'er spoil'd so much as they:
 Some, drily plain, without invention's aid,
 Write dull receipts how poems may be made;
 These leave the sense, their learning to display,
 And those explain the meaning quite away. [steer,

You then, whose judgment the right course would
 Know well each Ancient's proper character;
 His fable, subjects, scope in ev'ry page;
 Religion, country, genius of his age:
 Without all these at once before your eyes
 Cavil you may, but never criticise.

Be Homer's works your study and delight,
 Read them by day, and meditate by night;
 Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims
 bring,

And trace the Muses upward to their spring.
 Still with itself compar'd his text peruse;
 Or let your comment be the Mantuan Muse.

When first young Maro in his boundless mind
 A work t' outlast immortal Rome design'd,
 Perhaps he seem'd above the critic's law,
 And but from Nature's fountains scorn'd to draw:
 But when t' examine ev'ry part he came,
 Nature and Homer were, he found, the same.
 Convinc'd, amaz'd, he checks the bold design, }
 And rules as strict his labour'd work confine }
 As if the Stagirite o'erlook'd each line.

Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem ;
To copy Nature is to copy them.

Some beauties yet no precepts can declare,
For there's a happiness as well as care.

Music resembles poetry ; in each
Are nameless graces which no methods teach, }
And which a master-hand alone can reach. }
If, where the rules not far enough extend
(Since rules were made but to promote their end),
Some lucky licence answer to the full
Th' intent propos'd, that licence is a rule.

Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
May boldly deviate from the common track.
Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend ;
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
Which, without passing thro' the judgment, gains
The heart, and all its end at once attains.

In prospects thus some objects please our eyes, }
Which out of Nature's common order rise, }
The shapeless rock, or hanging precipice. }
But tho' the Ancients thus their rules invade
(As kings dispense with laws themselves have made),
Moderns, beware ! or if you must offend
Against the precept, ne'er transgress its end ;
Let it be seldom, and compell'd by need ;
And have at least their precedent to plead :
The critic else proceeds without remorse,
Seizes your fame, and puts his laws in force.

I know there are to whose presumptuous thoughts
Those freer beauties ev'n in them seem faults.

Some figures monstrous and misshap'd appear,
Consider'd singly or beheld too near,
Which, but proportion'd to their light or place,
Due distance reconciles to form or grace.

A prudent chief not always must display
His pow'rs in equal ranks and fair array,
But with th' occasion and the place comply,
Conceal his force, nay, seem sometimes to fly.
These oft are stratagems which errors seem,
Nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream.

Still green with bays each ancient altar stands
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands,
Secure from flames, from Envy's fiercer rage,
Destructive war, and all involving age.
See from each clime the learn'd their incense bring!
Hear in all tongues consenting Pæans ring!
In praise so just let ev'ry voice be join'd,
And fill the gen'ral chorus of mankind!
Hail! Bards triumphant, born in happier days,
Immortal heirs of universal praise!
Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow;
Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!
Oh! may some spark of your celestial fire,
The last, the meanest, of your sons inspire,
That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights,
Glow while he reads, but trembles as he writes,
To teach vain wits a science little known,
T'admire superior sense, and doubt their own!



PART II.

Causes hindering a true judgment—I. Pride—II. Imperfect learning—III. Judging by parts, and not by the whole. Critics in wit, language, versification only—IV. Being too hard to please, or too apt to admire—V. Partiality—too much love to a sect—to the Ancients or Moderns—VI. Prejudice or prevention—VII. Singularity—VIII. Inconstancy—IX. Party spirit—X. Envy. Against envy, and in praise of good-nature. When severity is chiefly to be used by critics.

OF all the causes which conspire to blind
 Man's erring judgment, and misguide the mind,
 What the weak head with strongest bias rules,
 Is pride, the never-failing vice of fools.
 Whatever Nature has in worth deny'd
 She gives in large recruits of needful pride;
 For as in bodies thus in souls we find,
 What wants in blood and spirits, swell'd with
 wind :

Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defense,
 And fills up all the mighty void of sense :
 If once right reason drives that cloud away,
 Truth breaks upon us with resistless day.
 Trust not yourself; but, your defects to know,
 Make use of ev'ry friend—and ev'ry foe.
 A little learning is a dang'rous thing;
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring :
 There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
 And drinking largely sobers us again.

Fir'd at first sight with what the Muse imparts,
In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts,
While from the bounded level of our mind
Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind;
But more advanc'd, behold with strange surprise
New distant scenes of endless science rise!
So pleas'd at first the tow'ring Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky;
Th' eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:
But those attain'd, we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthen'd way;
Th' increasing prospect tires our wand'ring eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

A perfect judge will read each work of wit
With the same spirit that its author writ;
Survey the whole, nor seek slight faults to find
Where Nature moves, and rapture warms the mind;
Nor lose, for that malignant dull delight,
The gen'rous pleasure to be charm'd with wit.
But in such lays as neither ebb nor flow,
Correctly cold, and regularly low,
That shunning faults one quiet tenor keep,
We cannot blame indeed—but we may sleep.
In wit, as nature, what affects our hearts
Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts;
'Tis not a lip or eye we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.
Thus when we view some well-proportion'd dome
(The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, o Rome!)
No single parts unequally surprise,
All comes united to th' admiring eyes;

No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appear;
The whole at once is bold and regular.

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.
In ev'ry work regard the writer's end,
Since none can compass more than they intend;
And if the means be just, the conduct true,
Applause, in spite of trivial faults, is due.
As men of breeding, sometimes men of wit,
T' avoid great errors must the less commit;
Neglect the rules each verbal critic lays,
For not to know some trifles is a praise.
Most critics, fond of some subservient art,
Still make the whole depend upon a part:
They talk of principles, but notions prize,
And all to one lov'd folly sacrifice.

Once on a time, la Mancha's Knight, they say,
A certain bard encount'ring on the way,
Discours'd in terms as just, with looks as sage,
As e'er could Dennis of the Grecian stage,
Concluding all were desp'rate sots and fools
Who durst depart from Aristotle's rules.
Our Author, happy in a judge so nice,
Produc'd his play, and begg'd the Knight's advice;
Made him observe the subject and the plot,
The manners, passions, unities—what not!
All which, exact to rule, were brought about,
Were but a combat in the lists left out.
“What! leave the combat out?” exclaims the Knight—
“Yes, or we must renounce the Stagirite.”
“Not so, by Heav'n! he answers in a rage: [stage”—
“Knights, squires, and steeds, must enter on the

“ So vast a throng, the stage can ne’er contain ”—

“ Then build a new, or act it on a plain. ”

Thus critics of less judgment than caprice,
Curious, not knowing, not exact, but nice,
Form short ideas, and offend in arts
(As most in manners) by a love to parts.

Some to conceit alone their taste confine,
And glitt’ring thoughts struck out at ev’ry line;
Pleas’d with a work where nothing’s just or fit,
One glaring chaos and wild heap of wit.
Poets, like painters, thus unskill’d to trace
The naked nature and the living grace,
With gold and jewels cover ev’ry part,
And hide with ornaments their want of art.
True wit is nature to advantage dress’d,
What oft was thought, but ne’er so well express’d;
Something, whose truth convinc’d at sight we find,
That gives us back the image of our mind.
As shades more sweetly recommend the light
So modest plainness sets off sprightly wit.
For works may have more wit than does them good,
As bodies perish thro’ excess of blood.

Others for language all their care express,
And value books, as women men, for dress:
Their praise is still—the style is excellent;
The sense they humbly take upon content.
Words are like leaves, and where they most abound
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.
False eloquence, like the prismatic glass,
Its gaudy colours spreads on ev’ry place;
The face of Nature we no more survey,
All glares alike, without distinction gay ;

But true expression, like th' unchanging sun,
Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon ;
It gilds all objects, but it alters none.

Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent as more suitable.

A vile conceit, in pompous words exprest,
Is like a clown in regal purple drest :

For diff'rent styles with diff'rent subjects sort,

As sev'ral garbs with country, town, and court.

Some by old words to fame have made pretence,

Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense ;

Such labour'd nothings, in so strange a style,

Amaze th' unlearn'd, and make the learned smile.

Unlucky, as Fungoso in the play,

These sparks with aukward vanity display

What the fine gentleman wore yesterday ;

And but so mimic ancient wits at best

As apes our grandsires, in their doublets drest.

In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold,

Alike fantastic, if too new or old :

Be not the first by whom the new are try'd,

Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

But most by numbers judge a poet's song,
And smooth or rough with them is right or wrong ;
In the bright muse tho' thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire ;

Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,

Not mend their minds, as some to church
repair,

Not for the doctrine but the music there.

Those equal syllables alone require,

Tho' oft the ear the open vowels tire,

While expletives their feeble aid do join,
 And ten low words oft creep in one dull line :
 While they ring round the same unvary'd chimes,
 With sure returns of still expected rhymes ;
 Where'er you find " the cooling western breeze,"
 In the next line it " whispers thro' the trees :
 If crystal streams " with pleasing murmurs creep,"
 The reader's threaten'd, not in vain, with " sleep :"
 Then, at the last and only couplet, fraught
 With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
 A needless Alexandrine ends the song, [along.
 That like a wounded snake drags its slow length
 Leave such to tune their own dull rhymes, and
 know

What's roundly smooth, or languishingly slow ;
 And praise the easy vigour of a line [join.
 Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness
 True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
 As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
 'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence ;
 The sound must seem an echo to the sense.
 Soft is the strain when zephyr gently blows,
 And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows ;
 But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
 The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent roar.
 When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
 The line too labours, and the words move slow :
 Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,
 Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the
 main.

Hear how Timotheus' vary'd lays surprise,
 And bid alternate passions fall and rise !

While at each change the son of Libyan Jove
Now burns with glory, and then melts with love;
Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow,
Now sighs steal out, and tears begin to flow:
Persians and Greeks like turns of Nature found,
And the world's victor stood subdu'd by sound.
The pow'r of music all our arts allow,
And what Timotheus was, is Dryden now.

Avoid extremes; and shun the fault of such
Who still are pleas'd too little or too much.
At ev'ry trifle scorn to take offence;
That always shows great pride or little sense:
Those heads, as stomachs, are not sure the best
Which nauseate all, and nothing can digest.
Yet let not each gay turn thy rapture move;
For fools admire, but men of sense approve.
As things seem large which we thro' mists descry,
Dulness is ever apt to magnify.

Some foreign writers, some our own despise;
The ancients only or the modern prize.
Thus wit, like faith, by each man is apply'd
To one small sect, and all are damn'd beside.
Meanly they seek the blessing to confine,
And force that sun but on a part to shine,
Which not alone the southern wit sublimed,
But ripens spirits in cold northern climes:
Which from the first has shone on ages past,
Enlights the present, and shall warm the last;
Tho' each may feel increases and decays,
And see now clearer and now darker days;
Regard not then if wit be old or new,
But blame the false, and value still the true.

Some ne'er advance a judgment of their own,
But catch the spreading notion of the town;
They reason and conclude by precedent,
And own stale nonsense which they ne'er invent.
Some judge of authors' names, not works, and then
Nor praise, nor blame the writings, but the men.
Of all this servile herd, the worst is he
That in proud dulness joins with quality;
A constant critic at the great man's board,
To fetch and carry nonsense for my Lord.
What woful stuff his madrigal would be
In some starv'd hackney sonneteer, or me!
But let a lord once own the happy lines,
How the wit brightens! how the style refines!
Before his sacred name flies ev'ry fault;
And each exalted stanza teems with thought.

The vulgar thus thro' imitation err,
As oft the learn'd by being singular;
So much they scorn the crowd, that if the throng
By chance go right they purposely go wrong.
So schismatics the plain believers quit,
And are but damn'd for having too much wit.
Some praise at morning what they blame at night,
But always think the last opinion right.
A muse by these is like a mistress us'd;
This hour she's idoliz'd, the next abus'd;
While their weak heads, like towns unfortify'd,
'Twixt sense and nonsense daily change their side.
Ask them the cause; they're wiser still, they say;
And still, to-morrow's wiser than to-day.
We think our fathers fools, so wise we grow;
Our wiser sons, no doubt, will think us so.

Once school-divines this zealous isle o'erspread;
Who knew most sentences was deepest read:
Faith, gospel, all seem'd made to be disputed;
And none had sense enough to be confuted.
Scotists and Thomists now in peace remain
Amidst their kindred cobwebs in Duck Lane.
If faith itself has diff'rent dresses worn,
What wonder modes in wit should take their turn!
Oft leaving what is natural and fit
The current folly proves the ready wit;
And authors think their reputation safe,
Which lives as long as fools are pleas'd to laugh.
Some, valuing those of their own side or mind,
Still make themselves the measure of mankind:
Fondly we think we honour merit then,
When we but praise ourselves in other men.
Parties in wit attend on those of state,
And public faction doubles private hate.
Pride, malice, folly, against Dryden rose,
In various shapes of parsons, critics, beaus:
But sense surviv'd when merry jests were past;
For rising merit will buoy up at last.
Might he return and bless once more our eyes,
New Blackmores and new Milbourns must arise:
Nay should great Homer lift his awful head,
Zoilus again would start up from the dead.
Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue;
But like a shadow proves the substance true:
For envy'd wit, like Sol eclips'd, makes known
'Th' opposing body's grossness, not its own.
When first that sun too pow'ful beams displays,
It draws up vapours which obscure its rays;

But ev'n those clouds at last adorn its way;
Reflect new glories, and augment the day.

Be thou the first true merit to befriend;
His praise is lost, who stays till all commend.
Short in the date, alas! of modern rhymes,
And 'tis but just to let them live betimes.
No longer now that golden age appears,
When patriarch wits surviv'd a thousand years;
Now length of fame (our second life) is lost,
And bare threescore is all ev'n that can boast:
Our sons their father's failing language see,
And such as Chaucer is shall Dryden be.
So when the faithful pencil has design'd
Some bright idea of the master's mind,
Where a new world leaps out at his command,
And ready Nature waits upon his hand;
When the ripe colours soften and unite,
And sweetly melt into just shade and light,
When mellowing years their full perfection give,
And each bold figure just begins to live,
The treach'rous colours the fair art betray,
And all the bright creation fades away.

Unhappy wit, like most mistaken things,
Atones not for that envy which it brings;
In youth alone its empty praise we boast,
But soon the short-liv'd vanity is lost;
Like some fair flow'r the early spring supplies,
That gaily blooms, but ev'n in blooming dies.
What is this wit which must our cares employ?
The owner's wife that other men enjoy;
Then most our trouble still when most admir'd,
And still the more we give the more requir'd;

Whose fame with pains we guard, but lose with ease,
Sure some to vex, but never all to please ;
'Tis what the vicious fear, the virtuous shun :
By fools 'tis hated, and by knaves undone.

If wit so much from ign'rance undergo,
Ah! let not learning too commence its foe.
Of old those met rewards who could excel,
And such were prais'd who but endeavour'd well :
Tho' triumphs were to gen'als only due,
Crowns were reserv'd to grace the soldiers too.
Now they who reach Parnassus' lofty crown,
Employ their pains to spurn some others down ;
And while self-love each jealous writer rules,
Contending wits become the sport of fools ;
But still the worst wit most regret commend,
For each ill author is as bad a friend.

To what base ends and by what abject ways
Are mortals urg'd thro' sacred lust of praise !
Ah! ne'er so dire a thirst of glory boast,
Nor in the critic let the man be lost.
Good nature and good sense must ever join ;
To err is human, to forgive divine.

But if in noble minds some dregs remain,
Not yet purg'd off, of spleen and sour disdain,
Discharge that rage on more provoking crimes,
Nor fear a dearth in these flagitious times.
No pardon vile obscenity should find,
Tho' wit and art conspire to move your mind ;
But dulness with obscenity must prove
As shameful sure as impotence in love ;
In the fat age of pleasure, wealth, and ease,
Sprung the rank weed, and thriv'd with large increase :

When love was all an easy monarch's care,
Seldom in council, never in a war.
Jilts rul'd the state, and statesmen farces writ;
Nay, wits had pensions, and young lords had wit:
The fair sat panting at a courtier's play,
And not a mask went unimprov'd away;
The modest fan was lifted up no more,
And virgins smil'd at what they blush'd before.
The following licence of a foreign reign
Did all the dregs of bold Socinus drain:
Then unbelieving priests reform'd the nation,
And taught more pleasant methods of salvation:
Where Heav'n's free subjects might their right
dispute,
Lest Gold himself should seem too absolute;
Pulpits their sacred satire learn'd to spare,
And Vice admir'd to find a flatt'rer there.
Encourag'd thus, wit's Titans brav'd the skies,
And the press groan'd with licens'd blasphemies.
These monsters, Critics! with your darts engage,
Here point your thunder and exhaust your rage!
Yet shun their fault who, scandalously nice,
Will needs mistake an author into vice:
All seems infected that th' infected spy,
As all look yellow to the jaundic'd eye.



PART III.

Rules for the conduct of manners in a critic—I. Candour—Modesty—Good-breeding—Sincerity and freedom of advice — II. When one's counsel is to be restrained—Character of an incorrigible poet—and of an impertinent critic—Character of a good critic—The history of criticism, and character of the best critics, Aristotle—Horace—Dionysius—Petronius—Quintilian—Longinus—Of the decay of criticism, and its revival. Erasmus—Vida—Boileau—Lord Roscommon—Conclusion.

LEARN then what morals critics ought to show,
For 'tis but half a judge's task to know.

'Tis not enough taste, judgment, learning, join;
In all you speak let truth and candour shine;
That not alone what to your sense is due,
All may allow, but seek your friendship too.
Be silent always when you doubt your sense,
And speak, tho' sure, with seeming diffidence:
Some positive persisting fops we know,
Who, if once wrong, will needs be always so;
But you with pleasure own your error past,
And make each day a critique on the last.

'Tis not enough your counsel still be true;
Blunt truths more mischief than nice falsehoods do;
Men must be taught as if you taught them not,
And things unknown propos'd as things forgot.
Without good-breeding truth is disapprov'd;
That only makes superior sense belov'd.

Be niggards of advice on no pretence,
For the worst avarice is that of sense.

With mean complacence ne'er betray your trust,
Nor be so civil as to prove unjust.

Fear not the anger of the wise to raise ;
Those best can bear reproof who merit praise.

'Twere well might critics still this freedom take,
But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
And stares tremendous, with a threat'ning eye,
Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry.

Fear most to tax an honourable fool,
Whose right it is, uncensur'd, to be dull:

Such, without wit, are poets when they please,
As without learning they can take degrees.

Leave dang'rous truths to unsuccessful satires,
And flattery to fulsome dedicators,

Whom, when they praise, the world believes no more
Than when they promise to give scribbling o'er.

'Tis best sometimes your censure to restrain,
And charitably let the dull be vain;

Your silence there is better than your spite,
For who can rail so long as they can write ?
Still humming on their drowsy course they keep,
And lash'd so long, like tops, are lash'd asleep.

False steps but help them to renew their race ;
As, after stumbling, jades will mend their pace.

What crowds of these, impenitently bold,
In sounds and jingling syllables grown old,
Still run on poets in a raging vein,

Ev'n to the dregs and squeezings of the brain ;
Strain out the last dull droppings of their sense,
And rhyme with all the rage of impotence!

Such shameless bards we have ; and yet 'tis true,
There are as mad, abandon'd critics too.

The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,
 With loads of learned lumber in his head,
 With his own tongue still edifies his ears,
 And always list'ning to himself appears :
 All books he reads, and all he reads assails,
 From Dryden's Fables down to Durfey's Tales.
 With him, most authors steal their works, or buy ;
 Garth did not write his own Dispensary.
 Name a new play, and he's the poet's friend ;
 Nay, show'd his faults — but when would poets
 mend ?

No place so sacred from such fops is barr'd, [yard.
 Nor is Paul's church more safe than Paul's church-
 Nay, fly to altars, there they 'll talk you dead ;
 For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.
 Distrustful sense with modest caution speaks ;
 It still looks home, and short excursions makes, }
 But rattling nonsense in full vollies breaks,
 And never shock'd, and never turn'd aside,
 Bursts out, resistless, with a thund'ring tide.

But where's the man who counsel can bestow,
 Still pleas'd to teach, and yet not proud to know ?
 Unbiass'd or by favour or by spite,
 Nor dully prepossess'd, nor blindly right ;
 Tho' learn'd, well bred, and tho' well bred, sincere ;
 Modestly bold, and humanely severe ;
 Who to a friend his faults can freely show,
 And gladly praise the merit of a foe ?
 Bless'd with a taste exact, yet unconfin'd,
 A knowledge both of books and human-kind ;
 Gen'rous converse ; a soul exempt from pride ;
 And love to praise, with reason on his side ?

Such once were Critics ; such the happy few
Athens and Rome in better ages knew,
The mighty Stagyrte first left the shore,
Spread all his sails, and durst the deeps explore ;
He steer'd securely, and discover'd far,
Led by the light of the Mæonian star.
Poets, a race long unconfin'd and free,
Still fond and proud of savage liberty,
Receiv'd his laws, and stood convinc'd 'twas fit,
Who conquer'd Nature should preside o'er wit.

Horace still charms with graceful negligence,
And without method talks us into sense ;
Will, like a friend, familiarly convey
The truest notions in the easiest way.
He who, supreme in judgment as in wit,
Might boldly censure as he boldly writ,
Yet judg'd with coolness, tho' he sung with fire ;
His precepts teach but what his works inspire.
Our critics take a contrary extreme,
They judge with fury, but they write with phlegm ;
Nor suffers Horace more in wrong translations
By wits, than critics in as wrong quotations.
See Dionysius Homer's thoughts refine,
And call new beauties forth from ev'ry line !
Fancy and art in gay Petronius please,
The scholar's learning with the courtier's ease.

In grave Quintilian's copious work we find
The justest rules and clearest method join'd.
Thus useful arms in magazines we place,
All rang'd in order, and dispos'd with grace ;
But less to please the eye than arm the hand,
Still fit for use, and ready at command.

Thee, bold Longinus! all the Nine inspire,
And blest their critic with a poet's fire:
An ardent judge, who zealous in his trust,
With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just;
Whose own example strengthens all his laws,
And is himself that great sublime he draws.

Thus long succeeding critics justly reign'd,
License repress'd, and useful laws ordain'd:
Learning and Rome alike in empire grew,
And arts still follow'd where her eagles flew;
From the same foes at last both felt their doom,
And the same age saw Learning fail, and Rome.
With tyranny then superstition join'd,
As that the body, this enslav'd the mind;
Much was believ'd, but little understood,
And to be dull, was constru'd to be good:
A second deluge learning thus o'er-ran,
And the Monks finish'd what the Goths began.

At length Erasmus, that great injur'd name
(The glory of the priesthood, and the shame!)
Stemm'd the wild torrent of a barb'rous age,
And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.

But see! Each muse, in Leo's golden days,
Starts from her trance, and trims her wither'd bays!
Rome's ancient Genius, o'er its ruins spread,
Shakes off the dust, and rears his rev'rend head!
Then sculpture and her sister arts revive;
Stones leap'd to form, and rocks began to live;
With sweeter notes each rising temple rung;
A Raphael painted, and a Vida sung:
Immortal Vida! on whose honour'd brow
The poet's bays and critic's ivy grow:

Cremona now shall ever boast thy name,
As next in place to Mantua, next in fame!

But soon by impious arms from Latium chas'd,
Their ancient bounds, the banish'd Muses pass'd.
Thence arts o'er all the northern world advance;
But critic learning flourish'd most in France:

The rules a nation born to serve obeys,
And Boileau still in right of Horace sways.

But we, brave Britons, foreign laws despis'd,
And kept unconquer'd and unciviliz'd;
Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold,
We still defy'd the Romans, as of old.

Yet some there were, among the sounder few
Of those who less presum'd and better knew,
Who durst assert the juster ancient cause,
And here restor'd Wit's fundamental laws.

Such was the Muse whose rules and practice tell
"Nature's chief master-piece is writing well."

Such was Roscommon, not more learn'd than good
With manners gen'rous as his noble blood;
To him the wit of Greece and Rome was known,
And ev'ry author's merit but his own.

Such late was Walsh—the Muse's judge and friend,
Who justly knew to blame or to commend;
To failing mild, but zealous for desert,
The clearest head, and the sincerest heart.

This humble praise, lamented Shade! receive;

This praise at least a grateful Muse may give:

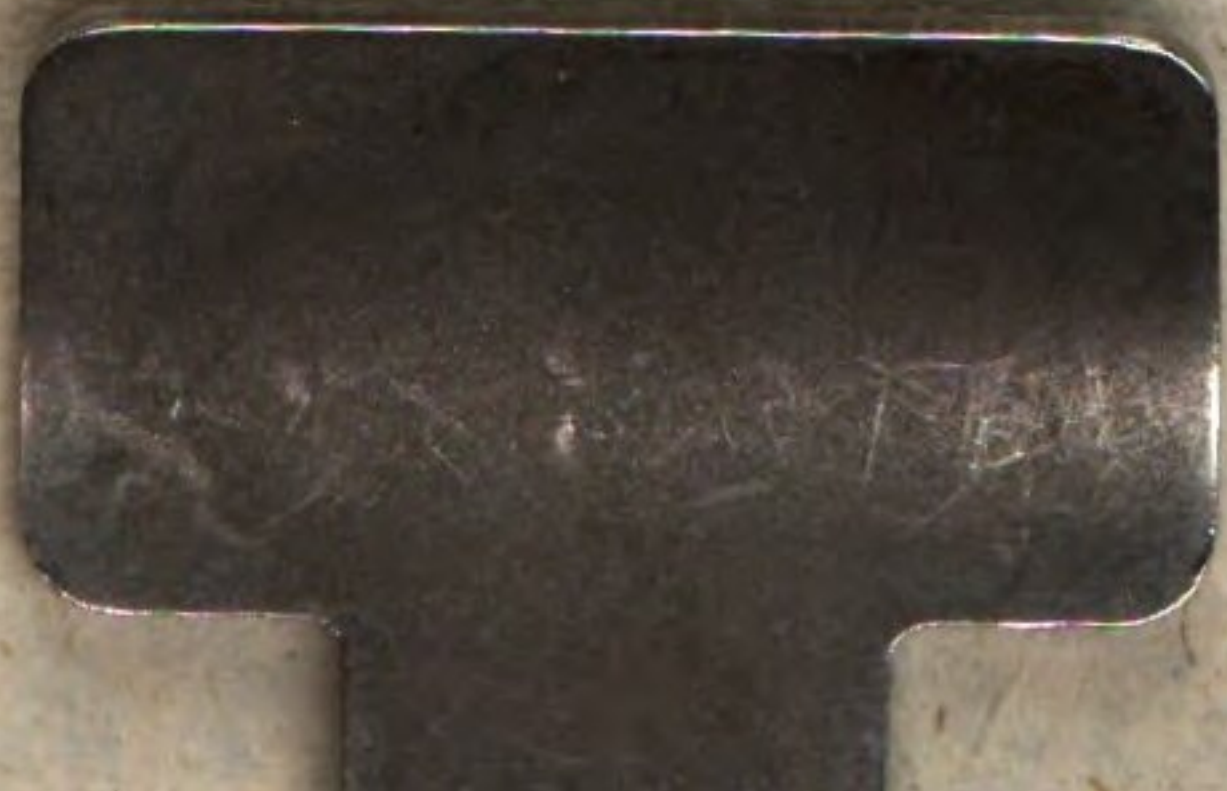
The Muse whose early voice you taught to sing,
Prescrib'd her heights, and prun'd her tender wing,
Her guide now lost, no more attempts to rise,
But in low numbers short excursions tries;

Content if hence th' unlearn'd their wants may view,
The learn'd reflect on what before they knew:
Careless of censure, nor too fond of fame;
Still pleas'd to praise, yet not afraid to blame;
Averse alike to flatter or offend;
Not free from faults, nor yet too vain to mend.

THE END.



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Staatsbibliothek
München















Pope, Alexander,

Essay on man and essay on criticism

Paris 1806

Bibl.Mont. 874

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